

BRIEFS

NOBTS SEARCH COMM. TO BE HEADED BY COX

NEW ORLEANS — The New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS) 11-member presidential search committee held its first meeting Nov. 1, and unanimously elected Frank Cox to chair the committee. Cox, senior pastor of North Metro Church in Lawrenceville, Ga., and current president of the full NOBTS board, will lead the effort to replace longtime NOBTS president Chuck Kelley, who has announced his intention to retire at the end of the current academic year. Mississippi Baptists on the search committee include Bryant Barnes, pastor of First Church, Columbia, and Gary Shows, interim executive pastor at Temple Church, Hattiesburg. Resumes for Kelley's replacement should be e-mailed to Cox at nobtspresidential-search@gmail.com, or sent via postal mail to Frank Cox, c/o North Metro Baptist Church, 1026 Old Peachtree Road NE, Lawrenceville, GA 30043.

ERLC INKS INITIATIVE WITH PRO-LIFE GROUP

NASHVILLE (BP) — The online pro-life group Stand for Life (stanforlife.org) has become a new initiative of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville. Stand for Life began about three years ago with a single post on social media by Jess Barfield of Dallas, a Baylor University graduate. The group, which seeks to promote human dignity through storytelling, has since grown to more than 41,000 Facebook followers and nearly 30,000 Instagram followers.

KY. BAPTIST SCHOOL TO DEPART CONVENTION

WILLIAMSBURG, Ky. (BP) — The University of the Cumberlands (UC) in Williamsburg, Ky., is working with Kentucky Baptist Convention (KBC) leaders to dissolve their voluntary covenant agreement. The action, which is subject to the approval of messengers at the 2018 KBC annual meeting, provides for the 10,000-student school to elect its own trustees. UC also will return nearly \$350,000 in Cooperative Program funds received this fiscal year.

Messengers gather for 2018 annual meeting

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

Messengers from Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) churches gathered for the convention's 2018 annual meeting Oct. 30-31 at First Church, Jackson, and elected by acclamation Mark Vincent, senior pastor of Clarke Venable Church, Decatur, to a second term as president.

Messengers also approved without dissent a 2019 Mississippi Cooperative Program (CP) budget of \$31,051,526, down slightly (1.1%) from the 2018 CP budget.

Other officers elected to 2018-2019 terms included:

■ **First Vice President:** Scott Thomas II, senior pastor of North Oxford Church, Oxford.

■ **Second Vice President:** Tommy Snyder, pastor of First Church, Batesville.

■ **Recording Secretary:** Michael Weeks, pastor of Pleasant Hill Church, Olive Branch.

■ **Assistant Recording Secretary:** Jerry Bingham, Benton-Tippah Association missions director, Ripley.

The 2019 CP budget contains \$11,799,579 for Southern Baptist Convention causes, an increase of .2% over the 2018 CP budget; \$625,000 for Church Retirement and Protection, a decrease of 10.7% from the 2018 CP budget; \$7,970,063 for Mississippi Agencies and Institutions, a decrease of .78% from the 2018 CP budget;



CONVENTION OFFICERS — Mark Vincent (second from right), senior pastor of Clarke Venable Church, Decatur, was elected to a second term as president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention during the convention's annual meeting Oct. 30-31 at First Church, Jackson. Other 2018-2019 convention officers elected include (from left) Jerry Bingham, assistant recording secretary; Michael Weeks, recording secretary; Tommy Snyder, second vice president; and Scott Thomas II, first vice president. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

\$10,656,884 for Mississippi Baptist Convention Board ministries, a decrease of 2.2% from the 2018 CP budget.

One resolution was approved by messengers, expressing ap-

preciation to host First Church, Jackson; the speakers, singers, and instrumentalists; president Mark Vincent; and those who have "served this Convention faithfully" as officers, board

members, trustees, committee members, and volunteers.

One motion was presented that would allow the Mississippi

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Christian set free by Pakistani court

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (BP and local reports) — Asia Bibi, a Christian mother of five, was released from Pakistan's death row Oct. 31 after that nation's Supreme Court reversed her 2010 conviction of blasphemy. She had been accused by a single Muslim woman of defaming the founder of Islam and the religion's holy book.



BIBI

Religious liberty advocates around the world expressed jubilation along with pleas that Pakistan's military protect Bibi.

Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) in Washington, D.C., that assisted with Bibi's case, said in a Facebook video,

"It's a complete victory. She's been in jail for almost nine years [but] she now will be returned to her family."

Renewed death threats against the court, other leaders, and Bibi should be taken seriously, advocates say. The entire Christian community is considered in danger in the nation that is more than 96% Muslim.

Her current location has not been disclosed. At least two countries have offered her asylum, CNN reported. Government protection is critical to Bibi's safety, ACLJ representative Shahrar Gill told Baptist Press on Oct. 23.

"She cannot be released openly. If she is, there's no doubt, no question about it, that her life will be in jeopardy. They feel proud of killing somebody like this."

Two government leaders who advocated for Bibi's release were murdered in 2011, and more than 50 people accused of blasphemy have been killed in recent years by angry mobs and others in Pakistan.

"The case of Asia Bibi illustrates the extent to which blasphemy laws can be exploited to target minority communities," said Tenzin Dorjee, chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), in a press release.

"These laws seek to protect entire religions rather than the individual, as should be the case under international human rights standards. It is deeply troubling that Bibi's case even reached this level where she almost became the first person in

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

All for the One

Ken Whitten was right. The senior pastor of Idlewild Church in Lutz, FL, outside Tampa, preached a few years ago at the annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention at First Church, Jackson, and he commented on how well Mississippi Baptists get along with each other. It's not that way in some of the other state conventions that comprise the Southern Baptist Convention, he further noted.

It wouldn't take long for an observant person to reach that conclusion about the year-round conduct of Mississippi Baptists, but it's especially true during our state convention's annual meeting and was quite obvious at the 2018 annual meeting just completed. We do get along, and the important Kingdom work remaining to be done is better off because of it.

In some states, the relationships between Baptists are so contentious that the state conventions have split into two distinct and sometimes competitive groups. In one state, Baptists aggressively sued Baptists in secular court for possession and control of convention property and assets. In at least three states where Baptists have split, there are two Baptist newspapers. The list of antagonistic activities in those states could go on and on.

Not so in Mississippi. Baptists here know how to keep our eyes on the prize. We have learned through the Lord's leadership in our lives to throttle egos, avoid unnecessary conflict, and move forward to accomplish our ultimate goal of helping to bring Mississippi and the world to Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20).

An important segment of the 2018 annual meeting serves as a good example. All five convention offices were filled by acclamation, or the proper parliamentary pronouncement: "One for All and All for One." It's certainly nice to hear that phrase repeated over and over again each year — a sure sign that politics is not the reason for attending the annual meetings.

Messengers approved without dissent the slate of nominees that will voluntarily serve our manifold Mississippi Baptist institutions and trustees. The newly-installed Mis-

issippi Baptist Convention Board, meeting immediately after the annual meeting adjourned, likewise elected their officers "One for All, and All for One."

It's a win-win for Mississippi Baptists. That's something a lot of Mississippi Baptists who skip the annual meeting cannot begin to understand. Messengers to the annual meeting are of course there to handle the business matters of their state convention, but it's obvious that they want to address those matters as thoroughly as necessary and as swiftly as possible so they can return to the annual meeting's praise and worship of our Heavenly Father and His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Praise and worship are what Mississippi Baptists do, and attending the annual meeting is like sitting in the best seat at an all-star game. The sanctuary of First Church, Jackson, rings with joy as messengers and guests express their love and commitment to the One who loves us and is committed to us.

The Bible Treasures devotionals are phenomenal, led by some of the brightest lights in the Southern Baptist Convention. The messages are unforgettable. The music is beyond inspirational. The atmosphere is unmistakably filled with the Holy Spirit. There's nothing else like it in Mississippi.

So, why weren't you there? In addition to the soul-satisfying praise, worship, and preaching, you could have been involved in determining the direction of the convention for the coming year — and beyond. Most Mississippi Baptists would be astounded to know the depth and scope of all the ministries they support each year, from Backyard Bible Clubs in local neighborhoods to distant countries on the other side of the world where our presence has to be kept a secret.

The annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention is simply too good to pass up. Make plans to attend next year, and to serve as a messenger from your church. Kingdom work works best when we are all involved.

You, too, will come to love the sound of, "All for One and One for All."

Two Precious Promises

How do we know what God wants us to do in any given situation? Does He give us some warm, fuzzy feeling of peace when we think about the right decision? Do we learn to see God's hand in strange coincidences or look for signs in our Cheerios?

Psalm 25 is a new favorite of mine, because it is about how God guides us and is a great template for how to pray for guidance today. There are two particular promises in Psalm 25 that are precious to remember when we seek God's guidance for our lives:

The sin of others does not disqualify you from God's will. All throughout this psalm, David talks about enemies who are trying to ruin his life. He declares, "My God, I trust in you. Do not let me be disgraced; do not let my enemies gloat over me. No one who waits for you will be disgraced..." (Psalm 25:2-3 CSB).

Many people look back on their lives and see how somebody messed them up — a parent, sibling, business partner, or ex-spouse. David had those people, too, and he said, "I trust that your promises are greater and more powerful than any of their evil intentions against me."

It's hard here not to think of Joseph, whose brothers' sin brought him a level of suffering few of us can imagine. Ultimately God used those things in Joseph's life as a way of fulfilling his destiny. At the end of his life, Joseph was able to say to his brothers that all the things they did to him were meant for evil, "but God meant it for good (Genesis 50:20)."

It is this belief in God's goodness that enabled Joseph to forgive his brothers. When he realized God had a greater plan, he was able to let go of the bitterness that comes from thinking someone else had ruined his life.

If the sovereignty of God is real, that means no one can ever ruin your life. They can wound you, abuse you, and betray you — but they can never ruin you. God's goodness toward you remains.

Your own mistakes do not disqualify you from God's will. At least two times in this psalm, David asks God for forgiveness for past



Guest opinion
with J.D. Greear

mistakes. Once is in verse 11: "Lord, for the sake of your name, forgive my iniquity, for it is immense."

"Immense" is certainly right. David was talking about heinous stuff that makes us cringe and yet he still prayed for God's guidance and perfect plan for his life because he believed God's promises were greater than his own mistakes.

You may think God will let you continually suffer for your mistakes because you brought it on yourself, but while sins and mistakes bring consequences into your life that can be painful — and sometimes permanent — even those sins don't disqualify you from God's ultimate plan for your life.

Look at Jacob, who sinned against his brother Esau. That sin led him into exile but while estranged from his family, he met the woman from whom would come the line of the Messiah.

Was this plan B? Did Jesus come out of the wrong plan? Not at all. It's not OK that Jacob sinned, and that sin affected him the rest of his life. Yet the Messiah still came from his line.

The Apostle Paul said, "If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself (2 Timothy 2:13 CSB)." You can count on God's faithful, consistent love because that love isn't based on your goodness. It's based on His. He doesn't give up on you, even when you give up on Him.

If you're not dead, God's not done.

Greear, pastor of 12-campus The Summit Church headquartered in Durham, N.C., is president of the Southern Baptist Convention. His commentary appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style.

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Party time: So. Baptist stance on alcohol shifting?

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — Amid a years-long battle with postpartum depression, anxiety, and insomnia, Jenny Morrison got some advice from her therapist that proved to be life-altering: "Why don't you try drinking a small glass of wine at night?"

When Morrison, a longtime follower of Jesus and a Southern Baptist, tried it that night, "it made me sleepy" and gave her almost immediate relief from the depression and anxiety, she said. Over the course of several years, she drank more, and more, and more — until she nearly lost her family and her life.

For well over a century, Southern Baptists have opposed drinking alcoholic beverages, in part over concern for the destruction alcohol has brought to people like Morrison. Amid national discussion this fall of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh's underage drinking and a mounting number of news reports on alcohol's negative effects, the reasons for Baptist opposition to drinking have come to the fore.

Yet some cultural observers say the Baptist consensus on alcohol may be shifting.

Hitting bottom

Morrison's struggle with alcohol came to a head when her husband and eight-year-old daughter returned home from a walk one day to find her passed out in a bedroom. Even though doctors had told Morrison she might die soon from kidney and liver failure if the alcohol abuse continued, "that switch had flipped on," she said of her compulsive drinking, "and there was just no turning it off."

However, her husband Tim had reached a breaking point. He removed her from the house temporarily, then found a treatment center in California that could help her through both the addiction and her struggle with mental illness. After 31 days there in 2013 — accompanied by a sense of God's presence and the prayers of her friends — Morrison came home sober.

Aside from one relapse a month later, she hasn't had a drink since. "When I hit the hardest thing I've ever gone through in my life, I fell prey to" alcohol, said Morrison, currently a member of First Church in Hendersonville, Tn.

Total opposition

Morrison's now-total abstinence from alcohol is representative of Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) historic practice.

According to a 2007 LifeWay Research survey, just three percent of Southern Baptist pastors and 29% of Southern Baptist laity said they drank alcohol. That compared with 25% of non-



Photo by Neiron Photo/Shutterstock.com

Southern Baptist, Protestant pastors and 42% of non-Southern Baptist, Protestant laity.

In 2006, messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Greensboro, N.C., adopted a resolution expressing "our total opposition to the manufacturing, advertising, distributing, and consuming of alcoholic beverages."

After a lengthy floor debate, the resolution was adopted by what Baptist Press (BP) estimated as an 80% majority.

A public health study nearly a decade later seemed to underscore Southern Baptists' aversion to alcohol.

When the American Journal of Public Health published in 2015 a county-by-county breakdown of alcohol use in America, it caught the eye of Baptist historian Albert Wardin. He noticed that the journal's color-coded map of alcohol use by county corresponded almost precisely to a color-coded map of the largest religious group in each U.S. county published in his 2007 book, *The Twelve Baptist Tribes in the U.S.A.*

In majority-Baptist counties, the drinking rate was almost always lower than in surrounding non-Baptist regions — from an isolated county on the Nevada-California state line to a strip of counties in eastern New Mexico to a cluster of counties in north-central Florida.

Social media voices

Earlier this year, a flurry of tweets against alcohol use emerged from Southern Baptist pastors and SBC entity leaders including:

■ Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

■ Jeff Iorg, president of Gateway Seminary in suburban Los Angeles.

■ Former SBC president Steve Gaines, senior pastor of Bellevue Church in suburban Memphis. — Former SBC president Johnny Hunt, now the SBC North American Mission Board's senior vice president of evangelism and leadership.

■ Current SBC president J.D. Greer, pastor of multi-campus The Summit Church based in Durham, N.C.

Among the tweets, Hunt highlighted a study published Aug. 23 in the medical journal *The Lancet* claiming alcohol has no health benefits — contrary to the claims of previous studies. In September, the World Health Organization's Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health estimated one of every 20 deaths in the world results from "harmful use of alcohol."

How much is too much?

Evan Lenow, an ethics professor at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, said Baptists' historic view of alcohol is based on Scripture, especially passages in Proverbs and Ephesians.

"Ephesians 5:18 is the clearest and least controversial of the passages," Lenow said in written comments. "In that verse, Paul clearly prohibits drunkenness. There is not a real debate on this prohibition in Christian circles. Paul considers this a vice. He also includes drunkenness in vice lists such as 1 Corinthians 6:9-11."

Christians differ on how Scripture relates to alcohol consumption that stops short of drunkenness, Lenow said.

"The question for inerrantist evangelicals is how much alcohol is too much. Some say that any alcohol is too much" and reference passages like Proverbs 20:1 and Proverbs 23:29-35. "Some say that you must stop before drunkenness. The problem is quantifying drunkenness," Lenow said.

No 'ardent spirits'

With some exceptions, Southern Baptists have abstained from beverage alcohol since before the SBC's founding in 1845.

The temperance movement, which advocated curbing alcohol consumption, grew out of the Second Great Awakening in the early 1800s and took root with relative speed among Baptists.

In 1832, the Charleston (S.C.) Baptist Association adopted a resolution expressing "pleasure" with "the progress of temperance, and of entire abstinence in the use of ardent spirits," according to the association's minutes.

The association recommended churches "unite" in supporting "this good cause."

From the 1859 founding of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., faculty "supported temperance efforts and campaigns to keep regions 'dry' from alcohol," said current seminary president R. Albert Mohler Jr.

"Early records indicate that students and faculty were expected to abstain from alcohol," Mohler said in written comments. "Prominent Baptist layman Joshua Levering of Baltimore was chairman of the Southern Seminary Board of Trustees, and in 1896 he won the nomination of the Prohibition Party for President of the United States."

Procurement of whiskey was a topic of conversation in 1870s correspondence between Southern Seminary founder James Boyce and fellow faculty member John Broadus, but the whiskey seems to have been used medicinally, Baptist historian Gregory Wills wrote in his book, *The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1859-2009*.

Like many Americans, 19th-century Baptists used liquor as a medicine for ailments from teething to tuberculosis. They also used alcohol for the Lord's Supper before pasteurization and refrigeration made non-fermented grape juice commercially accessible in the late 1800s, according to a Ph.D. dissertation on prohibition by history professor Brendan Payne at North Greenville University in Tigerville, S.C.

First resolution

Total abstinence, however, was not commanded explicitly by Scripture, according to the Herald.

The SBC adopted its first temperance resolution in 1886, stating "that we, the members of the Southern Baptist Convention, reassert our trueless and uncompromising hostility to the manufacture, sale, importation and transportation of alcoholic beverages in any and all their forms. We regard the policy of issuing government licenses for the purpose of carrying on the liquor traffic as a sin against God and a dishonor to our people."

Southern Baptists, including Southwestern Seminary founder B.H. Carroll, led the charge for prohibition in state and national campaigns during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Their efforts paid dividends in 1920 when nationwide prohibition went into effect.

Prohibition was repealed in 1933, but that didn't change Baptists' stance concerning the ethics of drinking.

Wills wrote that since at least the mid-1800s Baptists have held "that a minister who drank alcoholic beverages was disqualified to preach."

Christian freedom?

Despite alcohol's dangers, Lenow suspects the Southern Baptist consensus on alcohol may be shifting. As evidence, he cites the lifting of alcohol bans at two Christian schools friendly to the SBC: Moody Bible Institute in 2013 and Dallas Theological Seminary in 2014.

He also recalls a conversation with the former pastor of a notable Southern Baptist church who spoke openly of his own alcohol use.

Following the 2016 SBC annual meeting in St. Louis, a convention goer wrote a blog post titled, *Why Baptists Drink but Might Not Want You to Know It*. In the post, she recounted her attendance at a lunchtime panel discussion during the convention at which a well-known Southern Baptist pastor referenced his alcohol use.

The blogger said she also "has grown to enjoy a glass of wine now and then."

Lenow's conclusion: "I believe we are seeing a change from total abstinence to a trend of acceptance of alcohol among Southern Baptists. The emphasis has moved from warnings about alcohol to highlighting Christian freedom."

Morrison, the wife and mother who fell prey to alcohol abuse, said "a whole lot" of her Baptist friends "drink socially."

"They won't do it at a sanctioned church function," she said, but about half feel liberty to drink at a "get-together" with church friends and even post about it on social media, she claimed.

"It's such a sticky subject," Morrison said. "...What's the line?"

I don't know when or where the group hug came into vogue, but it seems like you see it when groups get together or maybe on the television. There are funny group hugs that take place. There are weird group hugs that probably take place. A group hug is when more than two people meet up and they embrace, maybe just putting their arms around each other's shoulders. It could be five or ten people. Let's have a group hug before we start or before we go or whatever. I started studying the group hug and discovered in the Guinness Book of World Records that the largest group hug involved 10,554 people. It happened in Ontario, Canada. I don't know what brought it on, but that's a bunch of folks to be involved in a hugging.

Recently I received texts, emails, and voice mails from my fellow state Baptist convention executive directors to whom Mississippi Baptists sent some disaster relief money for the devastation they recently experienced in their states with Hurricanes Florence and Michael. Their state Baptist conventions were trying to help millions of people. Every one of the communications from those executive directors was a message of thanks and appreciation for the gifts they had received from Mississippi Baptists to help with their disasters.

These storms that hit the Southeast in 2018 were huge and destructive, for sure. Every one of the states we have helped and are helping experienced destruction of churches and homes and businesses. These leaders of Baptist conventions in the four states we helped wanted to say a huge thank you to all of Mississippi Baptists for what they said were our thoughtfulness and generosity in helping them.

One of the directors called last week during a session of our Mississippi Baptist Convention annual meeting. At the time my phone, while on silent, began vibrating. I realized somebody was urgently trying to get in touch with me, but I didn't look at the number and I didn't see a name. I took my phone and tapped the "answer" button and let whoever it



Group Hug

was listen to what was going on in the convention. One of the great choirs that was singing at the convention was in full voice and beautiful inspiration as I just held the phone and let whoever it was listen to the choir singing.

Eventually, the person hung up. I put my phone back in my pocket, only to find out later there was a voice mail. It was a friend of mine who said, "I was calling to thank you for the check that was received from the Mississippi Baptist Convention for our disaster relief efforts here, and it sounds like you are probably in session as a convention right now!" Well, we were, and I wasn't able to respond while I was sitting there in the service. All of these state leaders were just overboard with thanks and appreciation for you and our Mississippi Baptist Convention for sending help.

What we sent was money that had been approved by the MBC Executive Committee to take out of the operating fund of our convention to express our care and support for these damaged states. We sent checks to four state Baptist conventions: \$250,000 to North Carolina, \$250,000 to South Carolina, \$250,000 to Georgia, and \$250,000 to Florida. For the mathematicians out there, it doesn't take long to figure out those are a lot of dollars.

The amazing and wonderful thing is that these dollars were not Cooperative Program dollars. The dollars we sent had been accumulated from investments and put us in a position to say that we want to give and we want to help, and a million dollars was sent. The recipients were overwhelmed. The operating fund of the Mississippi Baptist Convention simply provides some financial cushion, as checks are constantly being sent to our institutions, agencies, entities, and missions around the world.

Here is what I saw taking place over a few days after Mississippi Baptists expressed their care for our hurting brothers and sisters. It was an effort and a group hug. It was hundreds of thousands of Mississippi Baptists reaching their arms around the millions of hurting people in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida to say to them that we are there with you and we are there for you. Of all people on earth who ought to understand how much this means, we should because Mississippi has had its fair share of storms. Two of the largest hurricanes ever recorded have hit our coast. Tornadoes, ice storms, and floods have come our way and people around the nation have responded time after time to say to us that they care about us

and want to help us. They have sent far more to us than the amount we sent the other day to help these other states.

We have been the recipients oftentimes of disaster relief dollars. Today, we have been the recipient of the reaching out with a group hug to say thank you, thank you, thank you, I'm so grateful for you. Following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 that was so damaging to our state as well as to Louisiana and Alabama, people literally around the world got involved in sending love and support to us. Through the disaster relief for the folks across our coast, it came through the Mississippi Baptist Convention, it exceeded over 20 million dollars that was given so that our folks could strive to be restored.

We knew the love and warmth of people caring about us and about our state. Now, many years later, we are involved to say we care and we join in with hundreds of thousands in our group hug. Our folks are not only sending money, we have been involved in the total disaster response in sending mass feeding units and chainaw teams that have participated from the beginning. Some in North Carolina, some in Georgia, and some were sent to Florida. What a great thing to have the privilege of seeing lives changed and blessed and hope given because of the care of people we may never have seen. Thank you, Mississippi Baptists, from the top of our state crisscrossed all the way to the lower part, thank you for being gracious in giving. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to touch those lives that have been broken and bewildered to help them know there are people who care. That's you, and I thank you. We will reach out beyond windows and walls and have a great, emotional hug to say it's wonderful to know there are people who care about you who may not even know you. When it comes to disasters, we are in it — not alone but together.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

First Person: Why must we endure natural disasters?

By Scott Pace
Correspondent

As we witness the impact of recent natural disasters on millions of lives, we are confronted with the question of why natural disasters occur. If God loves us and has promised to protect us, what explanation can be given for nature's destructive forces and how should we view them?



PACE

■ **Natural disasters result from man's original sin.** Through the sin of Adam when he rejected God's plan for his life, we know that sin entered the world and condemns all mankind of sin's guilt (Rom. 5:12). As God gave Adam rule over His creation (Gen. 1:28-30), "creation was subjected to futility" (Rom. 8:20) and Adam's sin resulted in the corruption of God's creation.

This is not limited to portions of God's creation, but "the whole

creation groans and suffers" (Rom. 8:22). Just as we still struggle against the sin nature that remains, creation fights against sin's corruptive effects, looking to Christ's establishment of a "new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1-6; 2 Peter 3:10,13). Until then, natural disasters can be an expected part of life.

■ **Natural disasters reflect God's judgment of sin.** Throughout the Scriptures, God used His sovereignty over His creation to enact His judgment of sin. The flood (Gen. 6-8), Sodom's destruction (Gen. 19), the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 7-11) and many other scriptural accounts indicate God's power over His creation to judge sin.

In the Gospel accounts, we see Christ's power over "the winds and sea" (Matt. 8:27) and other aspects of nature (Matt. 17:27), so we can be assured of God's continued ability to reign over His creation, even though He has given control to man, his sin, and Satan himself (Eph. 6:12; John 16:11).

■ **Natural disasters remind us of Christ's return.** Before Christ died, was resurrected, and ascended into heaven, He promised His return (John 14:1-3), but as He told His disciples about the end times He spoke of things that would signify His coming. Along with false prophets, wars, plagues, famines, and earthquakes (Luke 21:8-11), which are prevalent in our world today, Jesus promised "terrors and great signs from heaven" (v. 11).

The occurrence of natural disasters reminds us of the imminence of His return, our need to be prepared (Matt. 25:44), and the eagerness with which we are to wait (2 Tim. 4:8).

How to respond to natural disasters

■ **Pray for those affected.** The tragedy of lives lost and homes destroyed should drive us to our knees in prayer for all of those affected by natural disasters. We pray for God to use the tragic circumstances to accomplish

His good, perfect, and pleasing will (Rom. 8:28), but we also must pray for God's comfort and peace to embrace the hearts and lives of the many families, homes, churches, and individuals searching for comfort during this difficult time (Philippians 4:6-7).

■ **Position your life on God's Word.** Jesus promised that "heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). As the temporal value of this life and earth is seen through the destruction of a natural disaster, we must continue to establish our lives on that which lives and endures forever, the Word of the Lord (1 Peter 1:23-25).

As Jesus taught, "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock" (Matt. 7:24-25).

■ **Prepare for Christ's return.** Being prepared for Christ's re-

turn involves assurance of faith in Christ and living a life that is pleasing to Him "so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming" (1 John 2:28).

■ **Propagate our faith.** In light of Christ's imminent return, we should recognize the condition of the lost souls around us and across the world, resulting in sharing our faith with urgency (Matt. 28:18-20), but also with the physical needs around us in the wake of a natural disaster, we must be faithful to share the love and compassion of Christ as we minister to people in His name. This involves understanding that these disasters "lead to an opportunity for your testimony" (Luke 21:13) and we must make the "most of each opportunity" (Col. 4:5).

Pace holds the Johnny Hunt Chair of Biblical Preaching at Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., and is associate director of the seminary's Pastors Center.

ATWK HGPAT TW AE ATEVGH, DWGXT

TPATWD ATQ LPKNWD, GKI ZWTESI VQ

TGKIH; GKI DWGXT TPATWD ATQ TGKI,

GKI ATDYHA PA PKAE VQ HPIW: GKI ZW

KEA LGPATSWHH, ZYA ZWSPWFPPKN.

UETK ACWKAQ: ACWKAQ-HWFWK

Clue: $Y = U$

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Romans 8:1

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Billy Graham film follows his 'extraordinary journey'

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (BP and local reports) — The late Billy Graham's ministry spanned nearly 80 years and is chronicled in a new documentary entitled, *Billy Graham: An Extraordinary Journey*, available now on DVD and digital HD. The release date of Nov. 6 was a day before the 100th birthday of the beloved Southern Baptist evangelist who died in February.

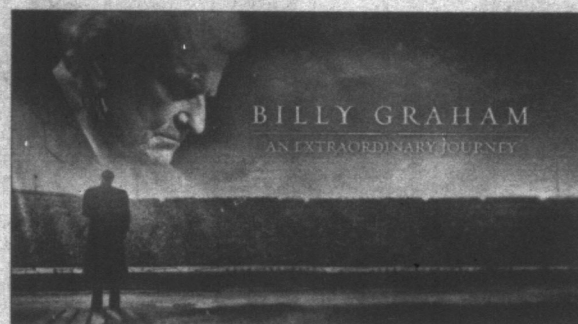
His son Franklin, who follows in his father's footsteps as CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), said the film tells his father's story as never before.

"You'll see things that you haven't seen before. We go back to the archives," the son said in a BGEA press release. "We've dug deep to pull this material together which gives God the glory but shows how God used one man."

Phil Boatwright, a film critic who writes regular posts for Baptist Press (BP) and is frequently published in The Baptist Record, praised the film. "For me what truly stands out in this documentary is Billy Graham's love for the lost," Boatwright told BP.

"What's more, his example can uplift our own daily walk or ministry. A viewing of the production reminds us of what God can do with a life completely surrendered to Him."

Among details chronicled in the 72-minute film is Billy Graham's staunch support of civil rights and the harassment he



suffered for supporting Martin Luther King Jr., according to a film clip BGEA released.

Graham was also legendary for his refusal to participate in crusades where attendees were segregated by race.

"There is no excuse ever for hatred," Graham says in the clip on the day of King's assassination. "There is no excuse ever for bigotry and intolerance and prejudice. We are to love as God loved us."

The film quotes Graham as saying years after King's death, "Now today, it's almost impossible for the present generation to understand what things were in those days, and what it took to [support civil rights], how many threatening letters we got, and how many threats against my family as a result of the stand that we took at that time."

The power of the Holy Spirit remained a mystery to Graham,

who personally preached to 215 million people over the course of more than 400 crusades, Franklin Graham said. "There's Holy Spirit-filled power in the Gospel, and my father preached the Gospel."

"Now, my father would tell you, 'I don't understand how it works, but I know it works,' and God uses the fact that Jesus Christ is God's Son, that He came to this earth to take our sins, that He died on a cross."

"He shed His blood for our sins, and God raised Him to life. There's Holy Spirit-filled power right there in that message, and that's what my father preached, and God used that in a mighty way to bring many people to faith in His Son, Jesus Christ."

Major retailers will carry the film, BGEA said, and it will be available at BillyGraham-Film.com.

WWI veterans memorial cross gets U.S. Supreme Court lifeline

BLADENSBURG, Md. (BP and local reports) — The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear the case of a 93-year-old World War I veterans' memorial in Bladensburg, Md., previously ordered dismantled because it's a symbol of Christianity and thus is unconstitutional.

Erected in 1925 with private funds from The American Legion and mothers of slain soldiers, the Bladensburg WWI Veterans Memorial known as the Peace Cross stood unchallenged for 90 years, until the American Humanist Association (AHA) sued in 2014.

The cross is 40 feet in height and composed of tan concrete with exposed pink granite aggregate, located at a busy three-way intersection. The memorial was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2015.

First Liberty Institute in Plano Texas, and international law firm Jones Day — the largest legal prac-



Bladensburg Peace Cross

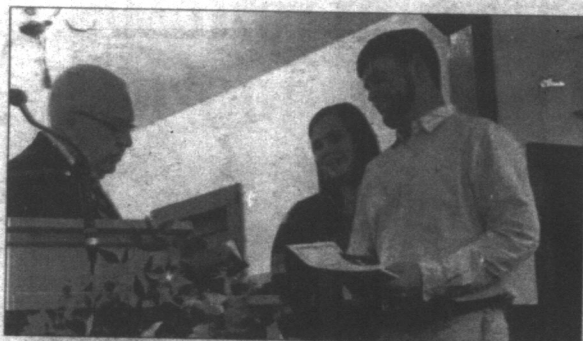
tice in the U.S. — representing The American Legion, are asking the high court to overturn an appeals court ruling that the cross violates the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution because it is maintained with public funds.

"For nearly 100 years the memorial has stood to honor these 49 sons of Prince George's County who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country," Jones Day attorney and lead counsel Michael Carvin said in a Nov. 2 press release, when the Supreme Court announced it will hear the case. "The Supreme Court should not allow their memory to be bulldozed."

The court's ruling will affect thousands of similar memorials nationally, First Liberty said. "If this monument is bulldozed to the ground," First Liberty President and CEO Kelly Shackelford said, "it's only a matter of time before the wrecking ball turns on Arlington National Cemetery and the thousands of memorials like this one across the country."

Editor's note: Baptist Press photo is courtesy of First Liberty Institute.

Just for the Record



VICTORY CHURCH, BASSFIELD, held deacon ordination for Garrett McClure (right) on Oct. 28. Pictured with McClure are wife Trinity McClure and pastor Nathan Barber (left).



ESCATAWPA CHURCH, ESCATAWPA, conducted the fall meeting of Woman's Missionary Union on Oct. 19. Yard decorations were made.



MT. COMFORT CHURCH, BRUCE, held deacon ordination Oct. 21 for Trey Logan (second from left). Pictured with Logan are (from left) pastor David Haggerty, father Barry Logan, mother Paige Logan, and brother Jayke Logan.



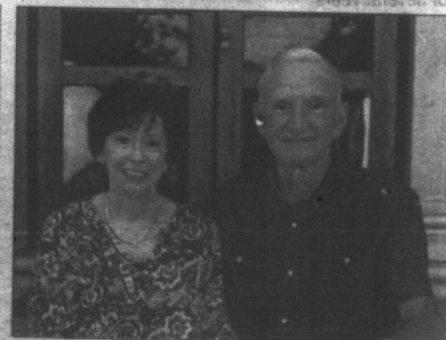
TUCKERS CROSSING CHURCH, LAUREL, mission groups Mission Friends, RAs, and GAs raised funds during October to purchase goats for needy families in foreign countries through Baptist Global Response, a missions agency affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. Church members Wayne and Ginger McLemore brought four baby goats to the church playground to help the children envision their project. Missions leaders are Marshall and Karen Fitzgerald and Bobbie Bridges. Eddie Bryant, pastor.



HOLLYWOOD CHURCH, SLEDGE, honored pastor Roy Hartzell and wife Claire upon their retirement after 24 years of service to the church. They were presented with gifts from the church.



FOXWORTH FIRST CHURCH celebrated pastor appreciation day Oct. 7 by recognizing their new pastor Tyler Chavis, along with wife Brittany and children Jase and Jessa.



TUCKERS CROSSING CHURCH, LAUREL, will honor pastor Eddie Bryant and wife Mary Ann for 40 years of ministry. A service of celebration, worship, and praise will begin at 10 a.m. on Nov. 18.

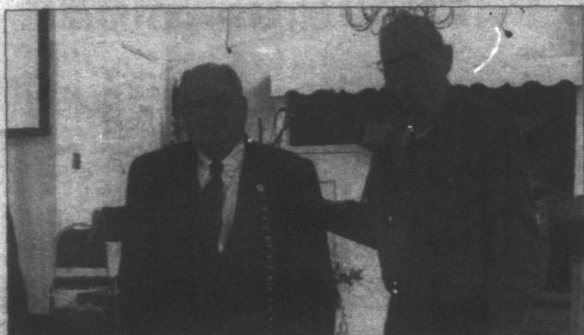


BETHEL CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO, recently celebrated Senior Adult Day with special preaching by Huey Moak, followed by a fellowship meal.



ARLINGTON CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO, recently recognized its children's missions groups. GAs (Girls in Action) received badges for their yearly missions projects. Pictured are participants and their leaders. Stephen Slump, pastor.

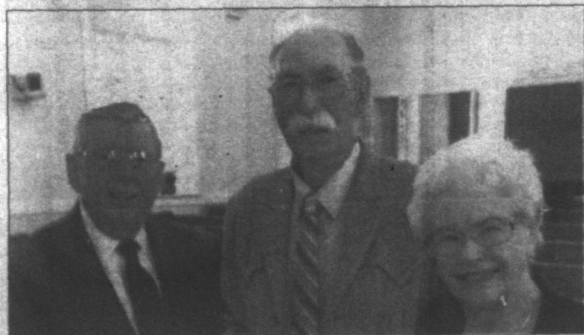
Just for the Record



SALEM CHURCH, LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION, presented John Johnson (left) with a perfect attendance pin for 58 years. R.W. Shelton made the presentation.



GUNTER ROAD CHURCH, FLORENCE, recently honored Irving and Barbara Forrester for their years of service. Irving has served as deacon for 30 years and Barbara was church secretary for several years.



FIRST CHURCH, DURANT, held deacon ordination service Oct. 21 for John Brown (center). Pictured with Brown are wife Nancy and pastor Lyn Nations (left).

Revivals & Anniversaries

► **Mt. Horeb Church, Meridian**: 170th anniversary celebrations, Nov. 18. Worship service 11 a.m., followed by potluck lunch.

► **Fairview Church, Indianola**: 145th Homecoming, Nov. 18. Worship service, 10:30 a.m. Bill Taylor, speaker. Lunch will follow the service.

► **Horseshoe Church, Tchula**: Homecoming, Nov. 11. Worship service, 11 a.m. Pastor Mike Steen, speaker. Covered dish

will follow the service.

► **Shiloh Church, Houlika**: Revival, Nov. 11-14. Food and fellowship every night at 5:30 p.m. Revival service begins at 6:30 p.m. every night. Nursery provided. Will Livingston, speaker. Kevin Brown, pastor.

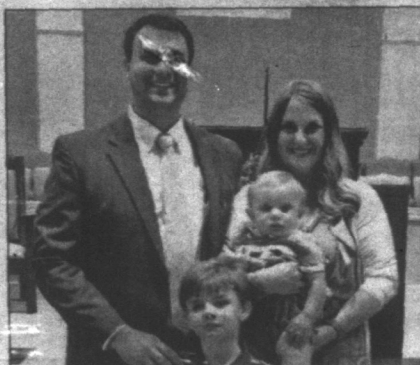
► **Jericho Church, Guntown**: Homecoming, Nov. 11. Cemetery decoration and honoring of veterans. Worship service, 10 a.m. with Fred Holcomb leading, followed by fellowship meal.

College News



MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE (MC) president Blake Thompson (front, center) visited with MC student nurses and faculty during the university's health fair at the 2018 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Oct. 30-31 at First Church, Jackson.

Staff Changes



MANTEE CHURCH, MANTEE, has called Zach Sanford as pastor. He is pictured with wife Aimee and sons Isaac and Grae. He most recently served as associate pastor and youth minister at Immanuel Church, Vicksburg.



FIRST CHURCH, POLKVILLE, recently called Will McNeese as pastor. He is pictured with wife Katie and son Nate.



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Senior Pastor—Bro. Jay Anderson

Sutherland Springs church looks back, plans ahead

SUTHERLAND SPRINGS, Texas (BP) — Once members of the news media journey to First Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, many leave with something unexpected after spending time with pastor Frank Pomeroy and the congregation, which lost 26 people in a mass shooting attack one year ago.

"Out of all the shootings I have covered," one reporter recently told Pomeroy, "you are the only ones who are smiling, thriving, and moving forward."

To be sure, there are still many tough days. Sometimes tears come at unexpected moments but almost from the beginning, the members of this small congregation have demonstrated a remarkably strong faith and kept an eternal perspective in the middle of their immense sorrow, heartbreak, and grief.

"I can only say that this is how God works things when you choose to keep looking up," Pomeroy said by phone a few days before the Nov. 5 anniversary. "There are a lot of tears and heartache, but the ability to move forward is much easier when you focus on the light and not the darkness."

In the earliest days after the shooting, Pomeroy — whose 14-year-old daughter Annabelle was among those killed — encouraged his church to "not let the enemy take any ground." He consistently insisted that Satan not have the victory from that dark day.

One year after the mass shooting, the congregation met for worship and a special service to commemorate those who died and to celebrate what God has done since.

"When you keep looking at others and not yourself, you focus on serving others and not what you are going through," Pomeroy said.

That approach has allowed the church to balance remembering and honoring those who died while at the same time moving forward. "There's no reason to stay anchored in the past because the Lord is alive," Pomeroy said. "As a whole, we are healthy and doing well. I've never walked into a church and felt the spirit so strong."

Hundreds crowded the church property on Nov. 4 as the church gathered for special services to remember the 26 who died and to remind survivors and attendees that evil did not win that day. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) was among those who addressed the group. "The horrific shooting that took place here could've ripped this community apart, but it didn't. Instead, you came together and turned to the Lord for strength, guidance and healing."

On Nov. 5, the exact anniversary of the shooting, church members, shooting survivors, and loved ones of those who died gathered privately on the prop-



PACKED HOUSE — Since the mass shooting on Nov. 5 2107, at First Church, Sutherland Springs, Texas, the congregation has been meeting in a temporary building until construction on a permanent worship center is completed. (BP photo courtesy of NAMB)



▲ REMEMBERING — Church members, family, and friends gather Nov. 4 at First Church, Sutherland Springs, Texas, for a special service in the afternoon commemorating the one-year anniversary of mass shooting at the church that took the lives of 26 members and left 20 injured. (BP photo)

► NEW FACILITIES — Construction on a new worship center and education building is underway at First Church, Sutherland Springs, Texas, with completion expected in Spring 2019. The church was the scene of a mass shooting on Nov. 5, 2017, that claimed 26 lives. (BP photo)

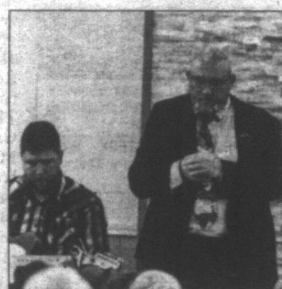
erty for a more intimate time of prayer and reflection. Part of the time will be spent in the congregation's new building, which is still being constructed.

"We will light candles," Pomeroy said, "and each person will be given a Sharpie they can use to write a blessing on a wall or the name of a loved one who died. Those names and words will be a permanent part of our new build-

ing. They will always be a presence there."

Even so, the congregation is also focused on new ministry opportunities and moving forward. A temporary metal building serves as the current worship center for the nearly 200 people who now attend services each week.

On the back lot — which a year ago did not even belong to the church — construction of the new,



COME TO WORSHIP — Pastor Frank Pomeroy (right) and bivocational worship leader Kris Workman begin the Nov. 4 morning worship service at First Church, Sutherland Springs, Texas. Workman was paralyzed from the waist down during the Nov. 5, 2017, mass shooting at the church. (BP photo)



permanent worship center and education building is progressing with an anticipated opening in spring 2019.

"Our current congregation is a very different mix," Pomeroy said. "Some still struggle with new people stepping up and doing things. Some have trouble with the crowd. Some want a quiet little church again and that's not where we are anymore."

Still, among all the change are powerful reminders of that day one year ago. The building where the gunman attacked the then 50-member congregation now stands as a memorial. Painted all in white, it contains 26 chairs placed exactly where each congregant who died was seated when the shooting started.

A single, red rose is placed on each chair, and the name of the victim is written across the top.

Artwork, banners, and messages sent from around the world are on display throughout their temporary building as vivid, daily reminders of the innumerable lives touched and hearts moved following the church tragedy.

So many gifts have been sent, all can't be displayed at the same time.

Pomeroy said one of the best surprises after the tragedy was to see churches of all denominations step forward with help and encouragement.

"I was surprised at how quickly denominational walls came down," Pomeroy recalled. "So many offered help, and people from all denominations let us know they were praying."

Among the worst experiences, he said, was the harassment that came from so-called "truthers" who showed up in town almost immediately accusing Frank, his wife Sherri, and other church members of making up the whole shooting.

"When I first heard about the shooting in Pittsburgh, my heart broke for those people," Pomeroy said. "It also angered me because I know for the next year they are going to have to put up with these 'truthers.' They are going to have to deal with these people telling them it never really happened."

"I wish I could go up there and put a hedge of protection around them myself," he said.

Support from Southern Baptists has been a sustaining presence in the congregation's progress, Pomeroy said. "We are so appreciative and thankful for the prayers, donations, the new church building. Words can't express how grateful we are and how much it has helped us in the healing process to know there is a plan ahead."

At its annual fall festival a few days ago, a family that just recently started attending the church told Pomeroy their son was ready to be baptized. The young man joins several dozen who have been baptized and become members in the year since the shooting — the most important example of how God is bringing joy from the ashes of tragedy.

There are other, smaller reminders as well. "There is fencing up around the church construction site," Pomeroy shared.

"Already, there are buttercups growing along that fencing. It is just one more reminder to me that God can overtake everything."

BIBI

cont. from p. 1

Pakistan's history to be executed for the crime of blasphemy."

More than 40 people convicted of blasphemy are currently on death row or serving life sentences in Pakistan, the ACLJ has said. Hundreds are serving or have served prison terms ranging from three years to 10 years.

Blasphemy laws criminalize fundamental human rights including freedom of speech and religion, Alliance Defending Freedom International (ADF) said.

"Blasphemy laws directly violate international law. All people have the right to freely choose, and live out, their faith," said Kelsey Zorzi, ADF director of advocacy for global religious freedom. "We therefore urge

"Blasphemy laws directly violate international law. All people have the right to freely choose, and live out, their faith."

Kelsey Zorzi

ADF director of advocacy for global religious freedom

all governments to uphold this right by ceasing enforcement and initiating repeal of their blasphemy laws."

Since 1986 when Pakistan reformed its blasphemy laws to be more severe, at least 150 Christians, 564 Muslims, 459 Ahmadis, and 21 Hindus have been jailed on blasphemy charges, according to Open Doors.

MEETING

cont. from p. 1

Baptist Foundation to accept and manage accounts from entities outside the MBC that are not in conflict with the Foundation, MBC, or Southern Baptist Convention. The motion will be voted on by messengers to the MBC annual meeting in 2019.

Messengers also approved without dissent the Report of the Committee on Nominations, which contained nominees to serve on the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) and other entities of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Robert Jeffress, senior pastor of First Church, Dallas, presented the Bible Treasures series of devotions.

The President's Address on Tuesday morning was presented by Vincent. The Convention Sermon on Tuesday afternoon was preached by Ronnie Falvey, senior pastor of First Church, Madison. The Tuesday evening message was presented by Jim Futral, MBCB executive director-treasurer. The final message on Wednesday morning was brought by Jeff Iorg, president of Gateway Seminary in suburban Los Angeles.

Worship through music was led by Billy Williams, worship pastor at Clarke Ven-



BIVO PASTOR FETED — Don Harding (center), pastor of Kolola Springs Church, Caledonia, is recognized as Mississippi Baptist's 2018 Bivocational Pastor of the Year on Oct. 31 during the 183rd annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention at First Church, Jackson. John Pace (right), director of pastor/leadership development at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, presented a plaque in honor of Harding's 41 years of bivocational ministry at Kolola Springs Church. Observing the award ceremony was Harding's wife of 51 years, Jean. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

able Church; Slater Murphy, MBCB director of church music; Ross Johnson, music and worship pastor at First Church, Madison; and the Worship Pastors Team.

Choirs participating in the annual meeting included the Worship Choir from Clarke Venable Church; Worship Choir from William Carey University in Hattiesburg; Missis-

siippi Singing Churchmen; and a combined choir consisting of:

- Main Street Church, Hattiesburg, led by J.R. Walley.
 - Calvary Church, Oak Grove, led by Daniel Lee.
 - First Church, Purvis, led by Allen Sims.
 - Carterville Church, Petal, led by Kris Smith.
 - Providence Church, Hattiesburg, led by Landon Roney.
 - Macedonia Church, Petal, led by Brett Sutherland.
 - First Church, Sumrall, led by Philip Butler.
 - Lamar Christian School, Purvis, led by Jessica McMillan.
 - William Carey University Chorale and Orchestra, Hattiesburg, led by Jim Armstrong and Wes Dykes.
- The 2019 MBC annual meeting will be held Oct. 29-30 at First Church, Jackson.

CLASSIFIEDS

HAMBURG FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IS PRAYERFULLY SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR. Please send resume to First Baptist Church Pastor Search Committee, 203 E. Parker St., Hamburg, AR 71646 or email to fcbhg.office@gmail.com. For more information you may call the church office at 870-853-5520.

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MS POSITIONS

HILLCREST BAPTIST CHURCH, BYRAM, PART TIME YOUTH MINISTER. Please send resume's to jsdholden@bellsouth.net

WOODLAND HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH, WATER VALLEY, MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME PASTOR. Please mail resumes to Woodland Hills Baptist Church P.O. Box 801 Water Valley, MS 38965 Attention: Pastor Search Committee. May also leave a message at 662-473-2331.

SUNRISE BAPTIST CHURCH OF LEAKE CO. IS SEEKING A PART TIME MINISTRY ASSISTANT. If interested please contact Sunrise Baptist Church at 601-298-9977 or email us at sunrisebc21@gmail.com for more info or application.

SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR — BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH. Located at Meridian, MS in the Whynot community of Southern Lauderdale County. Please email resume to office@whynotbethany.org or mail to Bethany Baptist Church, 4475 Ponds Road, Meridian, MS 39301.

WOODLAWN BAPTIST CHURCH, VICKSBURG, MS, SEEKING A PART TIME YOUTH PASTOR. Email resume to arutland@woodlawnbc.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC NEEDED@NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH, MONTICELLO, MS BI-VOCATIONAL/PART TIME JOC. Sundays Only. If interested contact Office @601-587-2862 or send resume to 618 Carmel New Hope Rd, Monticello, MS 39654 or email: nhbc@wb4me.com. College students welcome to apply. References required.

BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC: Kennedy Springs Baptist Church Magee, MS are seeking a bi-vocational minister of music to lead worship service. Mail resume to Mike West 2021 Simpson Hwy 540, Magee, MS 39111.

EAST END BAPTIST CHURCH OF CO. LUMBUS, MS IS CURRENTLY ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR NURSERY WORKERS on Sundays & Wednesdays to care for babies & children through 5 yrs. old. Must be at least 18 years old, child care experience preferred. A background check will be performed. Email resume to office@eastendbc.org.

TRUITT MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH IN PEARL, MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME PASTOR. Please send resume to 3705 Old Brandon Road Pearl MS 39208.

FULL TIME WORSHIP LEADER EXPERIENCED IN CHORAL CONDUCTING FOR SLAYDEN BAPTIST CHURCH. Send resume to Search Committee jstrahan@slaydenbaptistchurch.com or mail to Search Committee, Slayden Baptist Church, 2534 Hwy 72, Lamar, MS. 38642

HEUCKS RETREAT BAPTIST CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, MS IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC. Persons interested may email resume to Corey Myers at cmeyers913@gmail.com or mail to Heucks Retreat Baptist Church, 2167 Heucks Retreat Rd NE, Brookhaven, MS 39601, attn: Corey Myers. Position description available upon request. Deadline to apply is December 1, 2018.

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1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Sean A. Milner, Executive Director
P.O. Box 27
Clinton, MS 39060-0027
(601) 922-2243
www.baptistchildrensvillage.com

GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

OCTOBER 15-31

HONORS

Mrs. Kelvie Culpepper
Mrs. Dianne Smith
Ms. Elsie Lizana
Ms. Katherine M. Furr
Ms. Connie Sable
Ms. Katherine M. Furr

OCTOBER 15-31

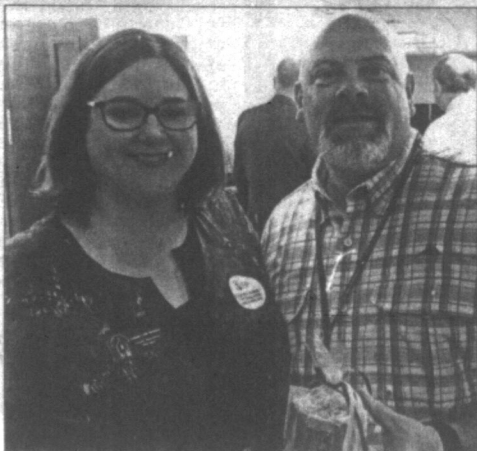
MEMORIALS

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Mr. & Mrs. Ronnie E. McNair
Mr. Winkie Allen
Mr. & Mrs. Ronnie E. McNair
Mr. John Anderson
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Mrs. Peggy McLean
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Rhonda Flowers Family
Mr. Joseph M Bonelli
Mr. & Mrs. Andy Oakes
Billy Brewer Sr.
Mr. & Mrs. Lance Wells

Congratulations to Rev. Millard Moak (left), pastor of CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH IN COLUMBIA, and Rev. Keith Ramage (below), pastor of NORTH CARROLLTON BAPTIST CHURCH, CARROLLTON, who both won a door prize from The Baptist Children's Village booth during the Mississippi Baptist Convention's annual meeting Oct. 30-31 at First Church, Jackson.



Rev. Millard Moak and Rev. Keith Ramage are pictured with Celeste Hickman, Baptist Children's Village public relations manager.



Levon Brewer

Mr. & Mrs. Lance Wells
Mrs. Gladys Burns
The Rogers Family
Dr. Matt Chandler
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Alexander
Mrs. Annie Ruth Clanton
Mrs. Betty L. Hall
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Fellowship BC
Mr. Billy Crowe
Mrs. Donna Crowe, Blake, Brad & Deyan
Mr. James Dunn
Ms. Elizabeth Ann Mann
Mr. James Lowery "Larry" Dunn
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Mr. John Ford
Mrs. Debbie Gregg
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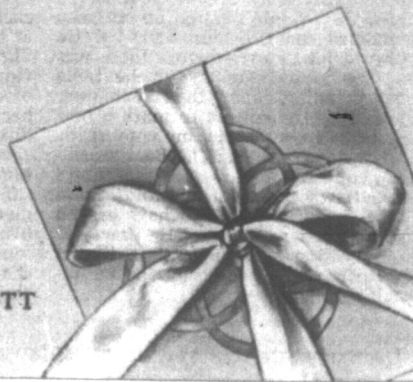
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With Control • James 3:1-12

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me." This childhood chant is such a lie! Words absolutely hurt. They also crush the spirit and destroy self-esteem. Words often hurt more than physical injury; and while bruises heal, words are recorded deep within our psyche.

As I listen to offenders share their stories, I often hear the voices of children who have been destroyed by the words of others - Mom, Dad, Grandparent, Teacher, Coach, Peers. "You are stupid." "You will never measure up." "You are too weak...too bad...too fat." "You are not good enough, strong enough, or smart enough." Words break up marriages, destroy families, tear apart churches, and even divide a nation.

In chapter 3, James provides an important lesson. He teaches us that believers should demonstrate godly maturity by controlling their speech. Our speech should be controlled in three ways: when teaching the truth, when influencing others, and when offering praise.

When Teaching the Truth (James 3:1-2)

James explained to his readers that teachers carry a greater responsibility knowing what they say is followed by others. He reminded his readers that teachers need to be mature and able to teach the truth at all times. James also warned that few should become teach-

ers because they will "incur a stricter judgment" (v. 1).

The teacher's maturity comes from the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things..." (John 14:26).

For those who do not teach the truth, there are dire consequences. Peter wrote, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves" (2 Peter 2:1).

Teachers, we must listen to the Holy Spirit for truth and stay far away from false teaching because we are held to a higher standard and are accountable to God for what we teach.

When Influencing Others (James 3:3-6)

While believers should demonstrate godly maturity when they teach the truth, they should also do so when influencing others. Believers must be

aware of how they can potentially influence others through their speech.

Folks, we all influence others. The question is "are we influencing for good or for evil?" James emphasized how the tongue can influence others, comparing it to bits used to guide horses, a ship's rudder, and a small fire. He reminded his readers that they must carefully express their thoughts because of the potential influence their words may have.

As I work with the offenders at Angola, I must be very careful with my words. I confess that I learned this lesson the hard

way. I was having problems with a person in security. I am ashamed to say that I made some disparaging comments in front of several offenders. I soon realized that I was influencing them to think negatively about that person. Not good!

According to Jesus, my tongue was muddering that person's reputation. Listen to His admonition. "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that every-

one who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing, shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell" (Matthew 5:21-22). Jeremiah wrote, "Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceit; with his mouth one speaks peace to his neighbor, but inwardly he sets an ambush for him" (Jeremiah 9:8). I was using my tongue as a deadly arrow to commit character assassination. I was so ashamed. We must be sure to control what we say when influencing others.

When Offering Praise (James 3:7-12)

Finally, James challenged his readers to demonstrate godly maturity when offering praise. He encouraged them to be consistent, with the tongue being a barometer. He reminds us that the same tongue that offers praise to God should also be complimentary of other humans who are made in God's image. Jesus reminds us that "the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man" (Matthew 15:18). Believers should view their speech as a window to the condition of their heart.

McGraw is a NAMB-endorsed chaplain at Louisiana State Penitentiary and member of Woodville Church, Woodville.



Explore the Bible
with Liz McGraw

Praying for Others • Matthew 6:11; John 17:11-23

As with last week's lesson, our text this week is Matthew 6:11, "Give us this day our daily bread." (KJV). We focused last week on our daily needs, and this week we will focus on the small word, "our." This single word reminds us that we are individually part of the body of Christ. We are a community of believers. The Greek word *ekklesia*, translated into English "church," means "a called-out assembly." That is why our Assembly of God friends selected their name. Unfortunately, somewhere along the line, our word "church" came to refer to the building instead of the body.

Jesus not only taught in the Lord's Prayer that we are a body - OUR Father, OUR daily bread, OUR debts, lead US not into temptation - He also modeled that in John 17:11-23. He prayed for us even before there was an us. Many versions of the bible have headlines along the way that are added by the editors to mark a new section. For example, my copy reads above Matthew 5:1 "The Beatitudes." My copy calls John 17, "Jesus prays for His disciples." Jesus told Simon Peter in Matthew 16, "I have prayed for you," so we see that He practiced intercession and taught it. Believers are commanded to go to God on behalf of others.

One of the greatest tasks we can do for other people is pray for them. It may not feel heroic or ever be noticed by others, but to go before the throne of God on behalf of someone else is powerful. James 5:16b reads, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," (KJV). Even as we pray for our needs, we should pray for the needs of others, interceding as if their needs were our own. Such prayer is one way we live out the great command in Matthew 22:39, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," (KJV).

While each believer comes to Christ individually, he or she then becomes part of the body, each with distinctive gifts and callings. Romans 14:7 reads, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself," (KJV). Throughout the New Testament, the scriptures teach us how to live with one another. In fact, sixty-four times from Acts to Revel., on the New Testament speak of how we should behave towards one another,

using the words, "one another." Ephesians 4:25 teaches, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another," (KJV). We are members of each other. The Christ in us and the Christ in them makes us one.

So many verses speak of the unity of the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:25 warns, "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members

should have the same care, one for another," (KJV). Many refer to forgiveness. Colossians 3:13 reads, "Forbearing one

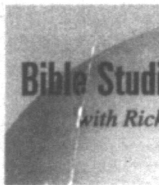
another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye," (KJV). Others, like 1 Thessalonians 4:18 and 5:11 urge us to comfort one another.

James 5:16a reads, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed," (KJV). This follows the well-known

passage about calling for the elders for prayer for healing, and the healing prayer of faith. In other words, healing of our bodies or souls in no solitary matter. Galatians 5:13 adds, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another," (KJV). Since many are involved in each salvation event, let us work together to share the gospel with one another.

1 John 1:7 teaches, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (KJV). Fellowship with one another includes praying for each other. Hebrews 7:25 says of Jesus, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them," (KJV). Jesus taught us in the Lord's prayer to pray for each other, and He prays for us. As we ask God for our needs, let us ask for the needs of others around us, both family, friends, and even enemies (Matthew 5:44.) May our prayers be focused on others, as should our lives be.

Henson is a member of Meadow Grove Church, Brandon.



Bible Studies for Life
with Rick Henson

Changing opinions crowding orthodox beliefs

NASHVILLE (BP) — Six in 10 Americans say religious belief is a matter of personal opinion, and for seven in 10 Americans such religious beliefs include one true God existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

However, an increasing majority of Americans are denying Jesus has always existed and many say the Holy Spirit is a force rather than a personal being.

Those are among the findings of a new study of American views on Christian theology from Nashville-based LifeWay Research, the evangelical research arm of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention that specializes in surveys about faith in culture and matters that affect churches.

"When the majority of Americans believe religious belief is more personal opinion than objective truth, then we expect to see contradictory beliefs [as well as] beliefs that change over time," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

The survey of 3,000 Americans was sponsored by Orlando-based Ligonier Ministries. Titled the 2018 State of Theology Study, it is the third in a series of surveys examining Americans' theological beliefs. Previous surveys were conducted in 2014 and 2016.

Survey questions focused on key doctrinal beliefs and included a number of areas where Americans often differ from historic and orthodox Christian views.

Character of God

A majority of Americans (70%) believe there is one true God in three persons. Eighteen percent disagree while 12% are not sure. This has remained consistent since researchers began asking the question in 2014.

Sixty-nine percent of Americans say God is perfect and cannot make a mistake, which is higher than both the surveys in 2016 (65%) and 2014 (63%).

Two-thirds believe the biblical accounts of the physical (bodily) resurrection of Jesus are completely accurate. Twenty percent disagree; 14% are not sure.

Fifty-seven percent of Americans say Jesus Christ is the only person who never sinned; 29% disagree and 15% are not sure.

A similar number say Jesus is a created being. Fifty-seven percent agree with the statement, "Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God." Twenty-eight percent disagree and 15% are not sure. That's a slight increase from 2016 when 52% agreed Jesus was created by God.

Fifty-nine percent say the Holy Spirit is a force rather than a personal being. Twenty-five percent disagree; 16% are not sure.

Twenty-six percent say God is unconcerned with their day-to-day decisions; 41% disagree and 13% are not sure.

The Bible

Researchers found Americans are split on their views of the Bible. More Americans believe the Bible is completely accurate, but a growing number say the Bible is not literally true.

In 2018, half of Americans say the Bible is 100% accurate in all that it teaches, up from 47% in 2016 and 43% in 2014.

Meanwhile, forty-seven percent of Americans agree the Bible contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but isn't literally true. Forty-three percent disagree. In 2016, 44% agreed the Bible isn't literally

ally true. In 2014, 41% said the same.

Researchers also found 36% of Americans say modern science disproves the Bible while 48% disagree.

"The last writing included in the Christian Bible was completed nearly 2,000 years ago," McConnell said, "yet Americans' beliefs around this book are shifting more than most other theological beliefs."

Sin & punishment

Sixty-two percent expect Jesus to return and judge all people. However, fewer expect people to be punished in a place called hell. While 54% of Americans surveyed agree hell is a real place where certain people will be punished forever. Thirty percent disagree.

According to the LifeWay Research study, 66% of the Americans admit everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature. Twenty-seven percent disagree and seven percent aren't sure.

Twenty-three percent of Americans say even the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation. Sixty-nine percent disagree and eight percent aren't sure. However, Americans are more likely to agree now than four years ago about the consequences of sin.

In 2014, only 18% of Americans said even the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation. In 2016, 19% agreed.

Americans with evangelical beliefs are the most likely to agree (49%) that the smallest sin deserves eternal damnation.

Salvation

A majority of Americans believe Jesus is the only way to eternal salvation. Sixty-two percent agree Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of sin from their lives. Thirty-eight percent disagree.

Fifty-seven percent of Americans say only those who trust in Jesus alone as Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation. Forty-three percent disagree. Those who identify with an evangelical (88%) or black Protestant (83%) denomination are more likely to agree than mainline Protestants (65%) and Catholics (58%).

Fifty-three percent believe righteousness comes only through faith in Jesus Christ and not because of one's actions. A third disagree while 14% aren't sure.

Moral authority

The share of Americans who believe the Bible has authority to govern our actions grew to a slim majority in 2018. Fifty-three percent agree "the Bible has the authority to tell us what we must do." This is higher than the surveys in both 2016 (50%) and 2014 (49%).

Sixty-two percent of Americans say the Bible is the highest authority for what they believe. Thirty-eight percent disagree. Americans from an evangelical (92%) or black Protestant (90%) denomination are more likely to agree than mainline Protestants (74%) and Catholics (67%).

Americans are fairly split on whether sex outside traditional marriage is a sin. Half say they believe sex outside traditional marriage is a sin, including 33% who strongly agree. Forty-one percent disagree, including 27% who strongly disagree.

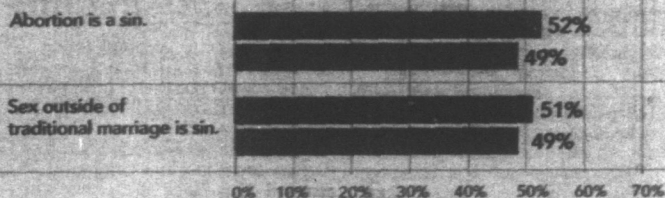
Fifty-two percent of Americans say abortion is a sin. Thirty-eight percent disagree while 10% aren't sure.

Americans' views of homosexuality continue to shift from historically ortho-

What is a Sin?

% OF AMERICANS WHO AGREE

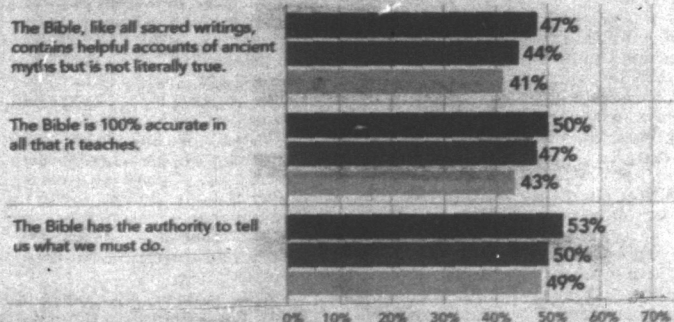
■ 2018 ■ 2016 ■ 2014



Beliefs about the Bible

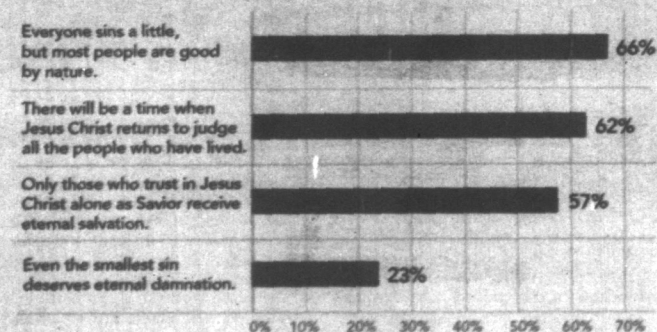
% OF AMERICANS WHO AGREE

■ 2018 ■ 2016 ■ 2014



Beliefs about Sin and Salvation

% OF AMERICANS WHO AGREE



dox Christian views. Forty-four percent believe the Bible's condemnation of homosexual behavior doesn't apply today. Forty-one percent disagree and 15% are not sure. In 2016, 42% agreed while 44% disagreed and 14% weren't sure.

LifeWay Research asked Americans about gender identity. The study found 38% believe it is a matter of choice while 51% say it is not a choice and 11% are not sure.

Worship

Nearly six in 10 Americans see valid alternatives to worshiping in a church with other believers, and more than a third say worship services should be entertaining if churches want to be effective.

Fifty-eight percent of Americans believe worshiping alone or with one's family is a valid replacement for regu-

larly attending church. Thirty percent disagree while 12% are not sure. Americans with evangelical beliefs are more likely to disagree (54%) that worshiping alone or with family is a valid alternative to corporate worship.

Thirty-seven percent of Americans say churches must provide entertaining worship services if they want to be effective. Half disagree. Americans ages 18-34 are the most likely to agree (46%). Americans with evangelical beliefs are more likely to disagree than those without evangelical beliefs (61% versus 49%).

"Church attendance has long been a measure of religious activity and devotion," McConnell said. "Today, less than half of religious service attendees see regularly gathering for worship with other believers at church as essential."

For more information visit LifeWayResearch.com and download the report, or visit TheStateofTheology.com.